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ABSTRACT

This document somewhat humorously deals with the topic of women's participation in the administrative process. The author commences by presenting procedures necessary for women to achieve success in administrative circles acceptable to academic deans of the "old school." Then she presents the qualities necessary to be accepted by the personnel deans or deans of women. The author concludes with practical advice for each woman in higher education with administrative ambition: master a subject area; concentrate on teaching students well; go to institutions that have a reputation for according respect to women students and women faculty; write research; belong to professional organizations; travel; cultivate a sense of humor. (Author)

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Involvement of Women in the Governance Process: Decision Making

Before you get to the point where you can be involved in the decision making process, you have to decide what steps to take to get there and whether or not as Browning says in "The Statue and The Bust":

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,

Venture as warily, use the same skill,

Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play! (ll.238-241)

In an attempt to demonstrate the way to climb Parnassus,

I would like to put before you a sense of history by showing you the

old way of climbing Parnassus, Olympus, or whatever you wish to

label the process. I thought of researching the question and giving

standard references, statistical studies, and the like, and scrapped

all this in favor of the view from Pompey's head, albeit the head had

grayed immeasurably in the process of twenty-two years struggle.

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The Old Way, as I shall call it, of climbing Parnassus splits into two tracks, the track for "Academic" personnel and the track for "Personnel" personnel: that is those who strove to be academic or faculty deans and those who strove to be deans of women or personnel deans.

The Old Way for academic deans, first of all:

1. Go to the right places--preferably one of the Seven Sisters, major in Classics, Philosophy, English or History, or even physical education. Teach well, care about students, publish a few significant monographs or papers, perhaps one book or two; be sure your doctorate is from one of the major graduate schools--preferably in the East; travel as much as possible in connection with your research; have as indigenous to (or cultivate same) an accent similar to Back Bay Boston, Eastern Shore Maryland, or Tidewater, Virginia. Don't be too visible (or at least not flashily so!), subdued Peck and Peck and an occasional

Chanel suit would do nicely. Be firm, be kind, be just, be knowledgeable about the groves of Acadème.

Your chances of getting to be the President or Dean of a woman's college (colleges had no Vice Presidents in the good old days) would have been fairly good.

You might marry, but probably not. Mildred McAffie Horton and Ms. McIntosh were notable exceptions. Virginia Gildersleeve, Sara Blanding, Kathrine McBride, Mary Wooley were much more "in style". And when a former and distinguished president of Bryn Mawr was asked, "How many of your graduates marry?" and was reputed to answer: "Only our failures marry"--no one batted an eye. Such was considered right and proper.

This was the old way to climb Parnassus and to earn the right to sit in Olympian Acadème. Once there, L'Etat c'est Moi"! None of this silly consultation business with faculty, students, colleagues! No whining, no oiling of squeaky wheels, no lament

about the loneliness of being a woman as president, as dean,  
etc. You had the education, the moral principles, the tempering  
of the Toledo blade, and the image of Miltonic Right Reason before  
you. Excelsior! You didn't worry about "clubs" either the old boys  
or the old girls. You were by divine right entitled to membership  
in the Cosmopolitan Club in New York and you had sufficient funds  
and college prerequisites to entertain graciously and pleasantly in  
the deanery or the president's house on campus. You passed out  
of office either through death or through a pleasant transition to  
Emeritus status. You were honored, revered, and sometimes even  
loved. Buildings were named after you, chapels dedicated to you,  
and your name was consecrated among the hosts of angels both in  
this world and the next.

In many ways those academic women of yore were giants  
in the earth. Tough-minded, often compassionate, sometimes grim.  
They knew whereof they were are and whence they were going. In

short, they made it. Personally I am sorry they are not around today. We could use them.

Now, the Old Way of climbing Parnassus for Personnel Deans or Deans of Women, was different in some respects although perhaps not in substance:

1. Again, go to the right places. Small colleges for women or small co-educational colleges and universities, often sanctified by church-relatedness--usually Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational. Major in English, history, philosophy, or psychology (although the latter was to be devoid of studies in "abnormal"). Then go to the university with a program in "student personnel." Study with the NAMES: Syracuse University with Dean Eunice Hilton; Columbia Teachers' College with Esther Lloyd-Jones; and with those names at Indiana, Ohio State, Stanford, Minnesota, and so on. Publish articles in the Journal of the National Association of Women Deans (now the NAWDC), the American Personnel and

Guidance Journal, the Educational Record. Be visible, visible, visible. Be meticulous in your grooming. Wear furs for the special occasion. (I remember attending an NADW convention in Washington in the 50"s and thinking I was at a Trapper's convention!) . Wear girdles, high heels, hats, and gloves (white where possible). Have your hair done at least once per week, and when you start to gray-- have a blue rinse.

Be firm, be kind, be just, and remember that you stand in loco parentis, and that yours is an analogous responsibility. While these are not "your girls" in fact, they are yours for the short time you stand accountable.

Your chances of getting to be the Dean of Women in a good college or a major university would be excellent.

And as for marriage? Don't be silly. Up all night with the telephone (a poor substitute in spite of certain modern paperbacks !)

and all day with women students and their problems with fraternity men. No marriage until the end of your career when prestige and leisure permitted you to have one of those new-fangled answering services!

Learn to parry the question of marriage as Dean Hilton used to do facetiously when asked (and they asked!) "Why have you never married?" with her answer, "I didn't know the last man who asked was the last!"

Make no mistake, in my opinion, these women too were giants in the earth. And the "demon of women's" word was the penultimate. Stockings, dresses, and heels on Wednesday night and Sunday noon dinner in the dining hall, permission slips (blanket and otherwise), and on and on. Minutiae, you say. Perhaps, but the other problems were there too--notably rape and pregnancy. And in the latter two grievous problems compassion was there (more often than not) in the "dean's" office.

The New Way to climb Parnassus: For Academic Deans,  
Vice Presidents, and Presidents: Go to the right places. The Seven  
Sisters still if you want to land these deanships or a presidency (two  
still remain, Wellesley and Barnard). Notable exception was Ruth  
Adams, formerly president of Wellesley, who was Radcliffe Ph.D.,  
Columbia M.A. and Adelphi, B.A. Don't think the Adelphi wasn't  
questioned!

Go to major graduate universities also: Columbia, Harvard,  
Yale, Johns Hopkins, and perhaps the large Western and Mid-Western  
citadels.

Major in economics, political science, social science, the  
natural and physical sciences. Publish on subjects concerning the  
Woman Question (but if you do, be sure you play it safe! Let the  
gist of your publications suggest that women are culturally deprived,  
neurotic, or strive to fail, or are politically suicidal in their attempts  
to emulate Carrie Nation), or publish on population problems, career

alternatives, social problems. In a tough-minded argument, duck, back, and fill (not because you are a woman but because that is the new "style" in administration these days!) Be careful of being either too slick or too blunt. Find the via media. Avoid women's caucuses, and above all resist that temptation to strike a kitchen match on your corduroy jeans --interpreted by some as a sure sign of lesbianism latent or blatant! No matter how strongly you feel about matters, don't "come on strong." The new administrative style, I alluded to, has a built in: "On the one hand thus and so" and "On the other hand so and so." Don't risk being a 'thus and so' or a 'so and so.' Play it cool.

Talk competently and with conviction about changing life styles and our necessity to understand them. Have great apparent tolerance for ambiguity. Always, however, be sure you state that you yourself are an "old-fashioned girl" -- and that your life style

approximates that of an older Elsie Dinsmore or Amelia Sedley rather than a V. Sackville-West, Virginia Woolf, Kate Millett, etc.

If at all possible, be young, be married, or be older and divorced. Dress with some flair but watch expense. Not necessarily Sears, Wards, or Speigels, but perhaps Macy's Better than that, make your own clothes and talk about it wherever remotely appropriate.

As an academician in the new mode, you climb Parnassus (not very likely to a presidency--it seems that even a female Prometheus Unbound could not hope in the 70's to aspire to that)-- you climb to the "A" category. (I understand that the "A" category emerged at a conference held at Wellesley College this past October, 1973, on Women Administrators) That is to say, assistant dean, associate dean, assistant provost, associate provost, or assistant vice president, or assistant to the President. You might even get to be a full-fledged Dean. Mount Holyoke has replaced its male academic dean with a female within the past year. Or you

might even get to be a vice president. The State University of New York has a woman academic vice president (the only one in the system), or, you might get to be a Provost. There is one woman in the SUNY system. In some ways, it seems to me, you get to be a college president only if you are already there, to wit: Wellesley, Hunter, Barnard, Bennington, Cedar Crest, Nazareth College (unless you are a religious and even church-related colleges for women are letting their presidencies fall to men in many cases). Let the bell toll as you listen to the colleges formerly headed by women--a few of the many only: Sweet Briar, Bryn Mawr, Connecticut College, Vassar--and those that ought to have women: Russell Sage, Agnes Scott, Mount Holyoke, Smith (?for the future!) haven't so far. As for the universities, I think Dr. Sylvia Bowman holds the position of Chancellor of Regional Campus Administration at the University of Indiana but I know of no others.

Let me digress a moment on the New Way for Personnel

Deans: Check Mate. The Dean of Women, as a position, is considered an anachronism today. We now have Deans of Students (almost invariably men) and Associate Deans of Students (almost invariably women) and we are back to the "A" category. Only in moments of crisis do we listen to personnel deans these days. Most of them do not sit in the councils of the mighty. The last time they did so was very likely in the late 60s, alas. So for all intents and purposes we need not address ourselves to personnel deans where the decision making process is concerned. The lower slopes of Parnassus are littered with those beloved fugitives from the "Trapper's convention;" as in Byron's "Destruction of Sennacherib"

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold

And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold

And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea

When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,

That host with their banners at sunset was seen!

Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn has blown,

That host on the morrow lay withered and strown! (11.1-8)

I don't mean to wax facetious or even ironic nor to be cynical,  
diabolical, or litigious. To level with you, let me say I am deeply  
concerned with what I call a regressive tendency where the status  
of women in higher education is concerned. We have lost ground  
Our Britomarts, both academic and personnel, have doffed their  
armor along with their bras. Like Shelley's loved one, we are exposed;  
and as a result:

Bright Reason will mock thee

Like sun from a wintry sky.

From they nest every rafter

Will rot, and thine eagle home

Leave thee naked to laughter,

When leaves fall and cold winds come. (Lines 11.27-32)

A bitter prospect, resulting in part, I am sure, from the invocation of the principle of regression toward the men in college administration which some of our affirmative action schemes have perhaps initiated.

I would not leave, however, on any negative note. Some practical advice, for what it is worth, is in order. Pope said in his "Essay on Criticism", "Be not the first by whom the new are tried/  
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside." (ll.335-336) In quoting Pope, I am not advocating a mealy-mouthed non-position. I am suggesting that you combine the qualities of the old with the potential of the new.

For example:

1. Master a subject area.
2. Concentrate on teaching students well.

3. Go, if you can, to institutions that have a reputation for  
  
according respect to women students and women faculty  
  
(watch out for some of the bastions of male dominance  
  
now courting women students !)
4. Think through a research problem and write it up with  
  
some effort to put your results before the scholarly  
  
world. Do this at least once per year. A modest  
  
bibliography builds in a hurry!
5. Attend professional organizations within and without the  
  
area of your special interests.
6. Travel whenever you can. It's a big world and you need  
  
to know some of it first hand. (And cultivate a sensitivity  
  
to another culture and language while you are at it.)
7. Decide what is important philosophically and pedagogically  
  
to you at a given time.

8. Don't tilt at windmills. Some things really are more  
important than others.
9. Never take criticism personally even when it is meant that  
way. To do so destroys your objectivity--which is your  
or anyone's most important asset.
10. Cultivate a sense of humor. If this is impossible, learn  
to appreciate the absurd.
11. Don't think a daily bath is sexist. Even the Roman  
Centurions saw the efficacy thereof.
12. Don't think you have to be one of the boys and swear  
like a trooper or drink everyone under the table. I  
don't like this barbarism in men or in women and I and  
many similar to me are in the "catbird seat."
13. Have the courage to be different if you are, but don't make  
a fetish of it or expect everyone to understand or approve.

14. Listen a great deal, but do not listen to the point where  
the ideas and thoughts you have become moribund or lie  
fallow too long to be of use to your colleagues and students.

Remember Britomart in Spenser's Faerie Queene. She kept her  
armor on until the battle was won.

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